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ABSTRACT

Extension and creative homework are discussed in this paper. Extension homework is assigned in order to transfer an idea or skill to a new or different situation. This form of homework is one way to develop reasoning and critical thinking skills. Examples of this type of homework are book and article reports. Creative homework requires students to compile skills and concepts in new and different ways. Examples of creative homework are surveys and oral reports. Students at any grade level can do surveys involving problem-solving in social situations. A creative homework assignment may be one in which students learn about some local, state, national, or international problem by interviewing their parents, neighbors, or city officials. Another way to encourage creativity is to have students work together in research projects that culminate in oral reports. Creative homework often involves the process of analysis. Forms for book, article, and oral reports, and surveys are provided. (SM)

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HOMEWORK

GOING BEYOND AND BEING CREATIVE

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Extension Homework

Extension homework is assigned in order to transfer an idea or skill to a new or different situation, i.e. go beyond the class lesson. Extension homework (going beyond) indicates whether or not students can or cannot enlarge upon basic facts or skills. This form of homework is one way to develop reasoning and critical thinking skills through homework.

The "Dear City Council" letter of a government class, also, serves as an example of extension homework. Students already know how to read and write. They find out about a problem in town perhaps while reading the town newspaper for current events discussions. The town council may be considering building new sidewalks. Students can write to the mayor expressing their opinions on the location of the new sidewalks. The students practice reading, writing, and organization. They, also, extend that reading and writing into a new content area, while using one of their constitutional rights, petitioning their government (Amendment One). This form of extension homework can be modified for use in any course which captures students' interest enough to take an action such as writing a letter.

Book Reports

A lesson may be about the powers of Congress. Should congress have broad powers or narrow powers? This was the issue confronting President George Washington in 1790 when the question came up about whether Congress could or could not establish a national bank. He asked his cabinet for written viewpoints on the issue. Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, was in favor of a broad interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. This interpretation would help the business community of the northeast. Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, was not in favor of a broad interpretation since it would not help the southern farmer. While the teacher is conducting this lesson, the teacher mentions that students can read a certain book about this issue. The students need to find a book and pick up a book report form (see Appendix). The individual student reads the book and fills out the report form. Any books could be mentioned or listed by the teacher. This book report becomes a type of extension homework. These students can be motivated to read a book about the U.S. Constitution and the powers of Congress by giving class credit or extra credit.

Article Reports

However, extension homework does not need to be as lengthy as book report form. Rather, single page report forms can indicate that students have gone beyond the class lesson. The history teacher can assign an article report (see Appendix) from an illustrated American history magazine or on any relevant topic that is being covered in your classroom. Using a magazine article report form helps students write more than a quick summary of the article. In this manner, students can do extension homework in the form of reading and reporting on magazine articles that can become the basis for a class oral discussion.

By using book report and article report forms, teachers channel extension homework and know that certain concepts and skills will be brought out. Teachers can adjust their report forms in order to emphasize any specific element of the report or to create new elements for the reports.

Extension homework is going beyond class lessons into reasoning/critical thinking skills. Only the teacher can determine how to extend from class lessons into homework. The teacher knows specifically how something is taught and what is emphasized. The teacher is the best designer of extension homework. The purpose of extension homework is for students to go beyond the classroom lesson into thinking about the ramifications of the lesson.

Creative Homework

Creative homework can be used at all subject and grade levels. The purpose of creative homework is for students to put together skills and concepts in new and different ways (a form of synthesis).

Kite building is an example of a creative homework assignment. The teacher can have students build a U.S. Constitution kite. On the kite students can symbolize some aspect of the U.S. Constitution. Students bring the kite to class and give an oral report on the construction of their kite and the U.S. Constitution as it relates to the designs/words on their kite. This project incorporates history (reading about kites and the U.S. Constitution), mathematics (figuring the kite's dimensions), industrial arts (building the kite), art (painting the kite), language arts (explaining the process as an oral report), and physical education (flying the kite).

Experimentation and the use of new ideas are very important in creative homework. In order to keep students from treating homework as a grind, something that must be done for virtually no other reason than the teacher requiring it, teachers need to assign more creative homework. This homework needs to focus on experimentation whether of a scientific or a social nature. Students should be expected to put together their knowledge and skills (synthesis) and come up with new ideas (at least new to them). This is a difficult but necessary task on the part of the teacher. By adding creative homework to a teacher's repertoire of homework strategies, variety can be introduced into those homework assignments. On occasion, the creative homework should involve some form of novelty, i.e. innovations not usually used during the course of normal events. Thus, teachers can break the so-called monotony of a course or a subject by using creative homework.

Surveys

Students of any age or grade level can do problem-solving which relates to social situations. They take their basic knowledge and apply it to society in creative ways. Thus, a creative homework assignment may be one that has students find out about some local, state, national, or international problem. The students come up with a solution or solutions to the

problem. The students can interview their parents, neighbors, or even call authorities such as a city official (if it is a city problem). The teacher can make up a simple format for students to follow such as the following one labeled "HOMEWORK" (see Appendix).

Oral Reports

The research report or project is another form of creative homework. Students are creative in the choice of their topics and in the way in which they demonstrate their new knowledge or skills. Creative homework (putting together) is a way in which students synthesize many skills and concepts.

Creative homework often involves the process of analysis. After a lesson on things that influence us or the presidential campaign, students are assigned to watch a television program's commercials or political campaign advertisements. They are asked to analyze the commercials/advertisements in order to determine which types of influences or propaganda devices are being used. At this point, we have extension homework. This assignment is going beyond the class lesson. However, to make the assignment a creative homework assignment, one additional element is added. After the students have determined which types of influences are being used on the audience, the students write a commercial/advertisement which in their opinions does a better job of selling the product/candidate. The analysis of the commercial/advertisement leads to extension homework but the use of that analysis becomes a creative homework assignment when the students put their own commercial/advertisement together (analysis, evaluation, synthesis).

Individual and group research is a major part of creativity homework. Under normal conditions in the public schools, research translates into projects and/or reports (see Appendix). Some of the most creative work teachers see students doing is connected with or in response to a project or report. Students usually need some form of guidelines so that they know where to put their work emphasis. The following format is used to record oral reports as they are given in class but were prepared as creative homework.

The teacher designs and provides creative homework by setting the stage for students to think creatively. Creative homework stimulates students' thinking to see new ways of looking at their world. Creative homework, also, stimulates the way that students present that world to others in the classroom. Creative homework involves the highest levels of Bloom's taxonomy for the cognitive domain: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. However, synthesis is at the heart of creative homework (putting together into new forms or ideas).

Non-fiction
Book Report Form
American History-Government

Name _____

Date _____

Hour _____

1. Bibliography

Author _____ Title _____

City _____ Publisher _____

Copyright Date _____ Number of Pages _____

2. Main idea

A. Type of book _____
(Man, Woman, Nature, Society)

B. Topic of book _____
(History, Government, Other--Explain)

C. State the main idea in one sentence:

_____

_____

D. Locate the best statement of the main idea in the book. Page(s) _____

E. Discuss the main idea in detail:

F. State the ways in which the main idea relates to you:

3. Historical aspects

A. Period of time involved_____

B. Location involved_____

C. List specific references to historical occurrences:

1. Occurrence_____Page(s)_____

Time period_____Location_____

Relationship to main idea:

2. Occurrence_____Page(s)_____

Time period_____Location_____

Relationship to main idea:

3. Occurrence_____Page(s)_____

Time period_____Location_____

Relationship to main idea:

4. Governmental Aspects

A. Governmental form_____
(anarchy, democracy, dictatorship, monarchy, other)

B. Level of government_____
(local, state, national, international)

C. State the location of the government_____

D. List specific points involving government:

1. Point_____Page(s)_____

Time period_____Location_____

Relationship to main idea:

2. Point_____Page(s)_____

Time period_____Location_____

Relationship to main idea:

3. Point_____Page(s)_____

Time period_____Location_____

Relationship to main idea:

5. Evaluation

A. Author

1. Describe the style of writing and how it conveys the message or main idea:

2. Describe the author's point of view toward the message:

3. Describe the author's manner in which he ends the message---completes it:

B. Your Personal Feelings

1. Toward the main idea:

2. Toward the supporting data of the main idea

3. Give any reactions toward any aspects of the book that have not been covered previously:

Article Report Form

Name_____

Date_____Hour___

Bibliography

1. Author:_____Title_____

2. Source Title:_____Pages_____

3. Publisher:_____City:_____Date:_____

Summary

4. Describe the main character(s):

5. Describe the plot or main idea:

6. List and describe historical aspects:

7. List and describe governmental aspects:

Evaluation

8. Give the main idea(s) the article conveyed to you:

9. Give your opinion or feelings toward the subject:

10. Give any ideas that were new to you:

HOMEWORK

PROBLEM

Ask your parent, grandparent, or neighbor to tell you about a problem facing the town, state, nation, or world. Write it here.

WHAT OTHERS SAID

Write down what different people told you about the problem and/or its solution.

SOLUTION

Write how you would solve this problem if you were President of the United State or a member of Congress.

Oral Report

Course_____

Period_____

Date_____

_____
Name(s)

_____
Summary

_____
Content

_____
Presentation

_____
Audio-visual Aids

_____
Evaluation

_____

Oral Report Guidelines

Summary: Did the report have a beginning, middle and ending?

Content: Was the subject historical, significant, worth learning, and related to class?

Presentation: Was the report freely given? Was the reporter sure of the subject?

AUDIO-VISUAL Aids: What use of aids was there? Photos, records, charts, diagrams, posters...

Evaluation: Did the reporter think about the subject or just copy down words? Was the reporter trying to make the material relevant to the class or merely mouthing words to finish a report. How much analysis was done in the report?